

Reclamation/NRCS Partner to Leverage Funding Opportunities for California Water Delivery Agencies and Agricultural Producers

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The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partnered under the Obama Administration's *2009 Interim Federal Action Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta* to leverage funding opportunities for water delivery agencies and agricultural producers in California.

This partnership between Reclamation and NRCS successfully resulted in funding projects to improve water supply reliability in California through water conservation, improved water management, and improved energy efficiency while addressing endangered species and other environmental concerns.

In November 2010, Reclamation made available a 2011 WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow) Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for Bay-Delta Agricultural Water Conservation and Efficiency grants. As part of the FOA, NRCS committed to provide accelerated funding and technical assistance to farmers for the on-farm conservation practices of the selected WaterSMART projects.

In May 2011, Interior and Agriculture announced the award of \$4.1 million to five water delivery agencies to fund projects to save water, improve water management, and create new supplies for agricultural irrigation. The selected grant recipients were Buena Vista Water Storage District, South San Joaquin Irrigation District, Semitropic Water Storage District, Henry Miller Reclamation District 2131, and Firebaugh Canal Water District. In turn, NRCS funded \$7 million for on-farm water use efficiency projects throughout the five districts.

As the program manager for these grants, I recently completed initial site visits. During the visits, it became apparent how beneficial this Reclamation/NRCS partnership is. The partnership provided a successful forum for district/farmer interactions and conversations for on-farm irrigation improvements. Due to the high level of on-farm interest resulting from this program, some of the districts increased their on-farm assistance programs.

The many benefits of this partnership and program were obvious during the South San Joaquin Irrigation District site visit. This is a large construction project for pressurized pipeline, and it was the federal support for the project, both monetary and technical, that enabled the district to move forward with the project.

What was especially impressive during this site visit was hearing the construction manager discussing the positive impacts of the project on the local community and economy: more people are now working, which in turn means more people are going out to eat at local restaurants and so forth. This is a fine example of the positive impact the federal government is making on communities, and I'm proud to be a part of it.

PHOTOS

Earthen canals are a significant method used to move water to farms throughout California. WaterSMART funds will line the canals, resulting in significant water savings and improved water management.
[Photo Credit: Shelly Hatleberg – Bureau of Reclamation]



Workers construct a holding basin to capture water runoff for future use. This technique will help meet WaterSMART program goals to improve infrastructure and conserve valuable water resources in the area.
[Photo Credit: Shelly Hatleberg – Bureau of Reclamation]



The South San Joaquin Irrigation District is installing more than 67,000 feet of pressurized pipeline.
[Photo Credit: Shelly Hatleberg – Bureau of Reclamation]



Newly-installed water pipeline is carefully inspected before being placed into service.
[Photo Credit: Shelly Hatleberg – Bureau of Reclamation]

